

Up to 10 percent of Strokes Occur in People under Age 45

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The news that Vice President Joe Biden's 41-year-old son has suffered a stroke is highlighting the problem of strokes in young people.

"Strokes can occur at any age," said Dr. José Biller of Loyola University Health System, author of the landmark textbook, "[Stroke](#) in Children and Young Adults."

Children and adults younger than 45 account for 5 percent to 10 percent of all stroke cases, Biller said.

"The impact of strokes can be devastating to young adults, their families and society," Biller said.

The quicker a patient is diagnosed and treated, the better the outcome. "But people don't think that children and young adults can get strokes," Biller said. "So family members often are slow to recognize strokes."

The incidence of stroke increases dramatically with advancing age. The incidence of stroke doubles each decade past 55 years of age. Half of all strokes occur in people older than 70 to 75 years, Biller said.

However, children and adults younger than 45 account for as many as 10 percent of all stroke cases. In developing countries, the proportion is even higher, with 20 percent to 30 percent of strokes occurring in people younger than 45.

There are notable differences in incidence, presentation, risk factors, and prognosis in stroke occurring in individuals younger than 45, compared with individuals older than 45. There are multiple causes of ischemic stroke, especially in young adults. Risk factors are extensive and diverse in this population.

A large proportion of strokes are preventable by controlling blood pressure, treating atrial fibrillation (irregular heart rhythm) and stopping cigarette smoking.

Warning signs of stroke include sudden:

- Weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Numbness or tingling of the face or one side of the body.
- Confusion or trouble understanding.
- Trouble speaking.
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Trouble walking; dizziness; loss of balance or coordination.
- Severe, unusual headaches.

If you experience stroke symptoms, call 911 immediately.

"Every second counts," Biller said. "Time is brain."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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